

## The Silk Road: China Meets the West

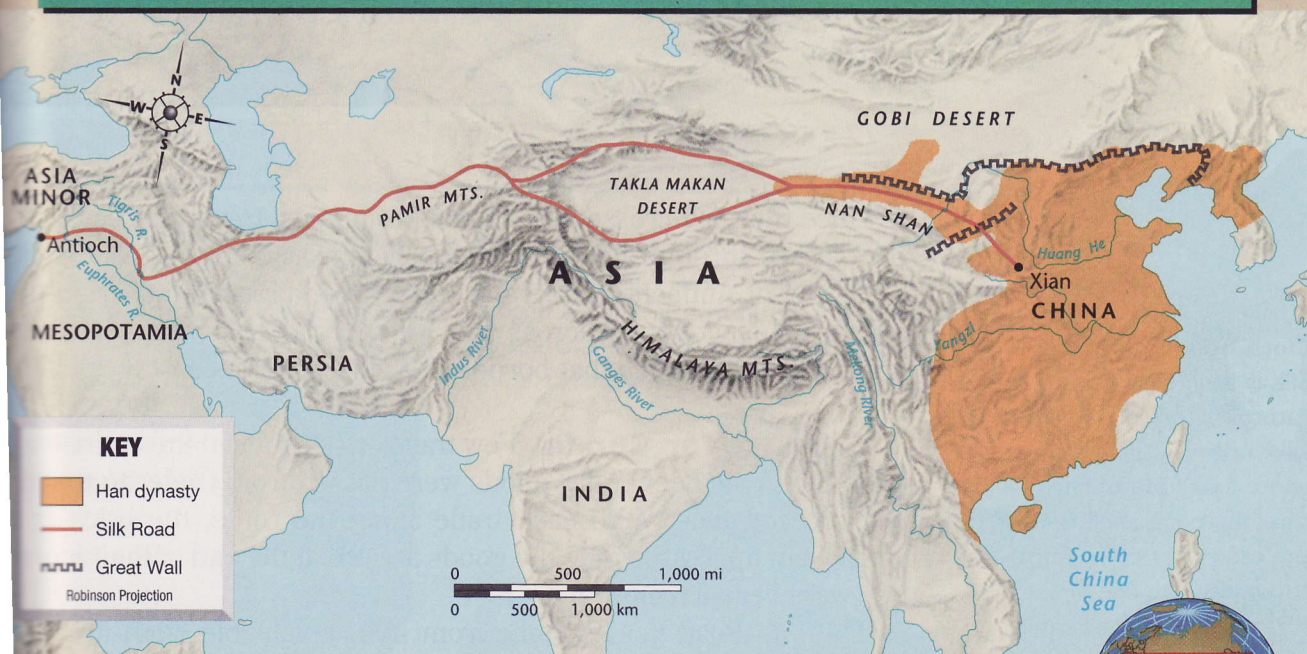
The Emperor Wudi's conquests in the west brought the Chinese into contact with the people of Central Asia. Trade with these people introduced the Chinese to such new foods as grapes, walnuts, and garlic. This exchange of goods gave rise to a major new trade route. Called the Silk Road, it ran all the way from China to the Mediterranean Sea. Follow the route of the Silk Road on the map below.

The Silk Road was not one continuous road. Rather, it was a series of routes covering more than 4,000 miles (6,400 km), a little less than the distance from Chicago to Hawaii. Travel along the Silk Road was hard and dangerous. The Silk Road began in northern China and went west along the Great Wall of China. Then, it entered a narrow fringe of land between the barren Gobi Desert and the towering Nan Shan, or Southern Mountains. More challenging land loomed to the west, where the Silk Road edged around the fringes of the dangerous Takla Makan Desert. Here, as you have read, travelers faced the peril of sudden, blinding sandstorms.



**Predict** What effect do you think the Silk Road had on China?

### The Silk Road



**Map Study** Travel along the Silk Road was dangerous. Unfriendly nomads and bandits often lurked along the route. Using the principle of safety in numbers, 50 or more traders usually set out together. **Location** Where did the Silk Road start? Where did it end?

